Ducks fend off Beavers in hostile Civil War

■ Guard Kourtney Shreve hits two clutch free throws to lift Oregon past Oregon State

By Scott Pesznecker
Oregon Daily Emerald

CORVALLIS — Nobody said that three-peating as Pacific-10 Conference champions would be easy.

Nor did anyone say it could be harmful to the Ducks' health.

But the first step of the journey was both Friday night in Corvallis, as the Oregon women's basketball team (8-3 overall, 1-0 Pac-10) bruised and battered its way to victory, 71-67, over Oregon State (8-3, 0-1) in the first of two Civil Wars.

A raucous green and orange crowd of 3,044 witnessed a game so physical that both teams were issued double personal fouls and double technical fouls — in one possession.

The Ducks didn't secure the win until sophomore point guard Kourtney Shreve hit two free throws with 16.2 seconds remaining, and Felicia Ragland, OSU shooting guard and premier Pac-10 player, threw up an airball from near the free-throw line.

"It was tough tonight, there's no doubt about it," Oregon head coach Jody Runge said. "They really wanted it and they played very, very hard."

Senior forward Brianne Meharry led the Ducks with 21 points, connecting 8 of 13 from the field and 5-for-6 from the free-throw line.

"Our team was extremely focused," said Meharry, who sprained her left ankle Dec. 16 against Utah and is playing with slight soreness. "This is the most excited that we have been for any game that we have played this year. We were definitely prepared for this game and taking it very seriously."

Ragland single-handedly kept Oregon State in the game, posting 24 points, 11 rebounds and six assists, falling short of the rare triple-double. Her trio of three-pointers, all quick pull-ups from the top of the arc, came just when it seemed as if Oregon would break the game open. Her final trey, with 56.2 seconds left, narrowed the score to 68-64.

Ragland then stole the inbound pass and scored a quick layup to make it a two-point game, but the Beavers missed three of four free throws in the final minute. Oregon made three-of-four from the stripe in the same span.

"We made a lot of mental mistakes down the stretch," Ragland said. "We've got to stay focused to the end. I thought we did well down the stretch, but we had a few key turnovers."

"Felicia is unbelievable when it comes to shooting the basketball and she definitely did a great job of making big plays to keep them in it down the stretch," Runge said. "But I thought our kids did a tremendous job of defending tonight, and a much better job of keeping them off the offensive boards."

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Oregon's Lindsey Dion continues to recover from injuries incurred earlier this season.

Senior forward Lindsey Dion had 14 points and a team-high four assists for Oregon, and senior forward Angelina Wolvert scored 12 points and grabbed a team-high nine rebounds.

Emotions boiled over near the end of the first half when Dion dove for a lose ball, colliding with Ragland and knocking her to the floor. Ragland immediately jumped up and got in Dion's face, but cooler heads prevailed and the players were separated. Dion and Ragland were issued technical fouls.

Before the collision, Dion and Oregon State forward Brina Chaney were issued double personal fouls when they locked and tangled in the key.

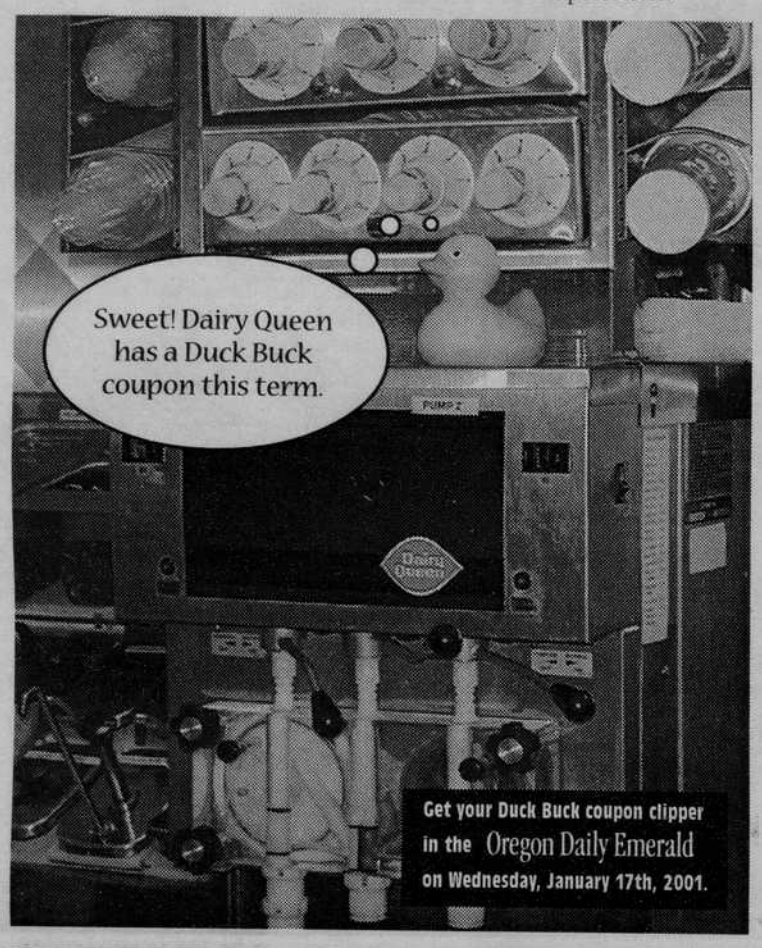
The most pivotal outburst of the game happened with 3:59 to play and the Ducks leading 62-60. Meharry and OSU center Ericka Cook bumped, tripped and fell in a heap while running down the court.

"I went down on the floor against Cook — she's a very good defensive player — and she kicked me," Meharry said. "I don't know if it was on purpose or an accident, but the ref caught it, and there was a lot of contact there.

"When I got up and tried to run by her and bumped her, the whole crowd saw that and screamed, but the refs caught the first foul."

Meharry made both free throws on the one-plus-one opportunity.

"I wouldn't say it was an end-all play, but I'm curious that he blew his whistle before she tripped, then looked like he didn't know what to call," Oregon State head coach Judy Spoelstra said.



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